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GENERAL

1. Italian Defense Minister reportedly to visit Egypt next month:

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[redacted] Italian Defense Minister Pacciardi has accepted an invitation from Prime Minister Nagib to visit Egypt early in February, [redacted]

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[redacted] Pacciardi will be accompanied by four or five high-ranking general staff officers.

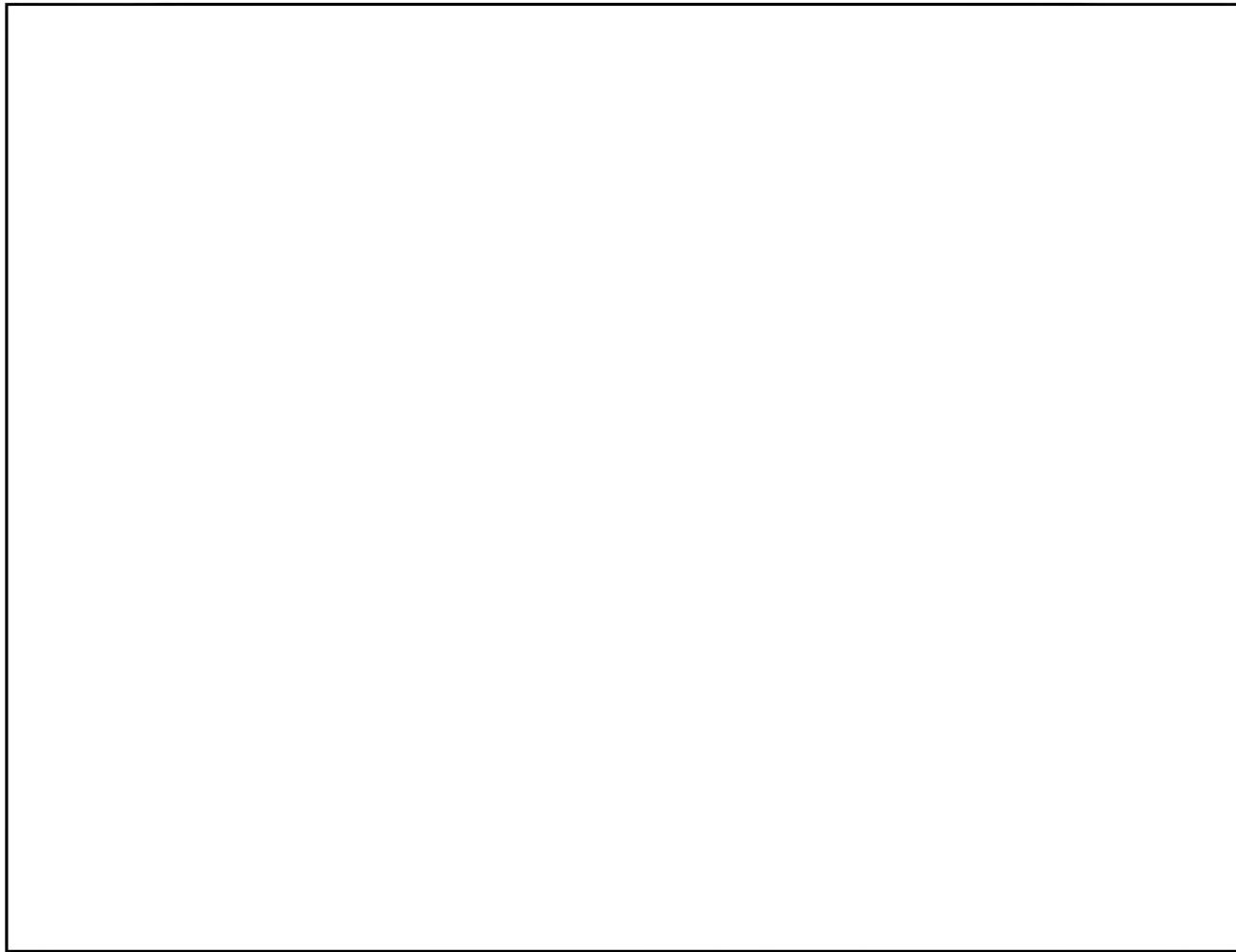
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Comment: Egypt's desire to strengthen its bargaining position with Great Britain and the United States on the question of Middle East defense would explain such a move to establish closer relations with Italy.

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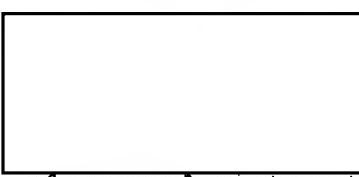


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SOUTHEAST ASIA

4. First Vietnamese elections seen as progress toward democracy:

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The American Consul in Hanoi describes the general reaction to the 25 January elections in Tonkin as one of cautious optimism that they might mark the first of many slow steps toward democracy. His own preliminary conclusion was that they may have far more validity than was expected, and may eventually represent a "solid blow" against the Viet Minh.

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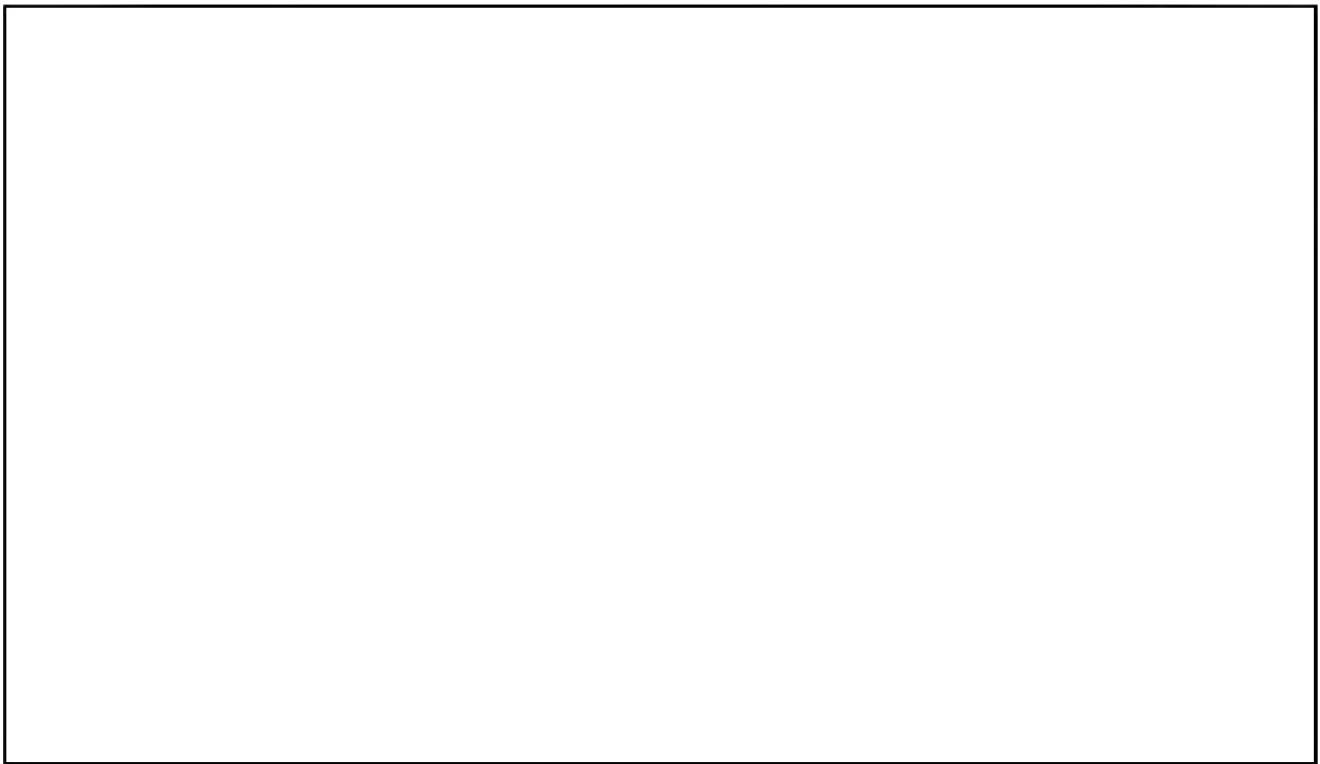
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Comment: Vietnam's first elections, although restricted to the selection of municipal councilors, have aroused considerable popular interest and have established a group of officials whose wishes the government cannot readily ignore. Results in Hanoi indicate overwhelming support for strongly nationalistic candidates who have been critical of the French-oriented government of Premier Tam.

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NEAR EAST - AFRICA

6. Israeli Foreign Minister believes Israeli-Syrian border accord likely:

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The Israeli Foreign Minister believes that current Israeli-Syrian boundary discussions will result in an agreement.

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He told the American Ambassador in Tel Aviv that the Israeli Cabinet has approved in principle a proposal for liquidating the demilitarized zone between the two countries, even though it entails giving up some territory.

Comment: The Syrian dictator, Colonel Shishakli, is also interested in reaching a settlement, although he may become more difficult as the negotiations progress. On the other hand, Jordan, because of its border difficulties with Israel, may endeavor to prevent any Israeli-Syrian agreement by exploiting popular Arab opposition to direct negotiations with Israel.

7. Israel undertaking "active" defense along Jordanian border:

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The Israeli defense force is undertaking an "active" defense along the Jordanian frontier. [redacted]

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[redacted] stated that Israeli forces will attempt to prevent the infiltration of Arabs from Jordan and make the Jordanians aware of the seriousness of the infiltration problem.

The American Army Attache believes that this may result in Israeli raids into Jordan, thus increasing tension in the area.

Comment: There have been previous indications from Amman and Tel Aviv that Israeli-Jordanian relations have sharply deteriorated in the last two weeks.

Israel's aggressiveness in this area contrasts with its current approaches to Syria. This suggests that Israel may be interested in settling its northern frontier problems while maintaining an unyielding attitude in the central area, where frontier arrangements are more complex and less satisfactory to Israel.

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WESTERN EUROPE

8. Comment on Soviet note on Austrian treaty:

The Soviet note of 27 January, demanding withdrawal of the abridged treaty as a condition for four-power negotiations, is an attempt to shift to the Western powers responsibility for failure to conclude an Austrian treaty.

By not specifically mentioning the questions of denazification, demilitarization and Trieste, the note suggests Soviet awareness of British, French, and Austrian willingness to negotiate on the basis of the old draft treaty instead of the abridged treaty.

Previous developments indicate that the Austrian, French, and probably the British Governments will exert strong pressure on the United States to accept the Soviet condition so as to avoid blame for obstructing a resumption of negotiations.

9. East German security controls may extend entirely around Berlin:

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American officials in Berlin believe that the East German Government may soon establish a "blocked strip" around the entire city, similar to the strip separating East Germany and the Federal Republic.

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[redacted] the East Germans plan to close shops, restaurants, and all "trade enterprises" in the vicinity of the city-zonal border. Refugees report that some shops within one kilometer of the US sector-zonal border have already been closed.

Comment: This is the first reliable indication of such East German intentions.

Although evidence still indicates that an intra-city barrier will be established, the East Germans may allow some controlled intersector traffic to continue, at the same time placing similar controls on traffic between East Berlin and the Soviet Zone. This method might achieve the objective of stopping the flow of refugees [redacted] without running into the practical difficulties of completely barricading the sector boundary within the city.

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